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**Transnational framings of British film policy:
The case of the UK Film Council**

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Introduction

In this chapter, my aim is to explore how a national film agency relates to transnational political, economic and cultural spaces. To that end, I have drawn on work undertaken for a research project that analyses the setting-up and eventual closure of the UK Film Council – once

intended to be Britain's leading body for the implementation of film policy.¹

To orientate the reader, here is the story in a nutshell. A British Labour government launched the Film Council in May 2000. It was re-badged as the UK Film Council in 2003. For just over a decade, the new agency became responsible for supporting the film industry and film culture in Britain, as well as advising government. The Film Council's mission was to create a 'self-sustaining' film industry. This was meant to come about through measures such as carefully targeted investment in film production, the encouragement of inward investment, co-production ventures, support for training to secure the British skills base, and regional screen development to counter the focus on London. In such areas, the Film Council was an important intermediary between the film industry and government that increasingly came to define itself more as

¹ My thanks go to the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council for funding 'The UK Film Council: A case study of film policy in transition', award number: AH/J000457X/1. The project's research team conducted the interviews with the informants cited below and its members are Gillian Doyle (PI), Philip Schlesinger and Raymond Boyle (CIs) and Lisa Kelly (Research Associate). I am grateful to the team, Dimitris Eleftheriotis, David Martin-Jones, and Richard Paterson for their comments.

an agent of the latter than the former. In addition to these areas, the Council was a key actor in advising government on tax breaks intended to encourage film production and keep the doors open to Hollywood in the face of international competition, and also took a significant initiative in encouraging digital distribution and exhibition. At launch, the responsible minister, Chris Smith MP, Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, required the Film Council to focus on the elusive task of bringing ‘sustainability’ to the British film industry (cf. Doyle et al.). The body had a wide range of responsibilities. Best known, perhaps, were the three film support funds that it ran. The Development Fund aimed to promote the production of screenplays; the New Cinema Fund centered on supporting emerging talent; and the Premiere Fund was set up to support mainstream popular British films. In a later phase, the UK Film Council was also engaged in promoting digital distribution and exhibition. In 2010, Jeremy Hunt MP, the Conservative Secretary of State in the newly elected Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government, decided to close down the Film Council. Various reasons were given, with savings in public expenditure as part of a

‘bonfire of the quangos’ well to the fore.² In fact, the politics of closure are murky but they need not detain us here (cf. Schlesinger, “Creation”). A key outcome of the UK Film Council’s demise was that the majority of its staff was transferred to carry on its work at the British Film Institute (BFI). Founded in 1933, the BFI is the long-established body devoted to promoting national film and television heritage and culture. In the game of bureaucratic politics, initially it was pushed into a subordinate role by the creation of the Film Council. However, the BFI emerged from the tangle as a victorious survivor. But the price was its changed remit, incorporating much of the UKFC’s previous work.

Why should any of this interest us? There are good theoretical reasons, as to why this should be of interest, as well as insights to be gained about how film policy works in practice. Taking our distance from the institutional detail of a British public body, therefore, we might note that the ‘national’ level offers a well-recognized entry point into the

² In British administrative parlance, a ‘quango’ is a quasi-non governmental agency. So the ostensible reason for closure was to cut bureaucracy and waste and to show that the scale of the state was being shrunk.

global contexts of production, circulation and consumption of film. Nataaa • urovi•ová observes that •the ‘transnational’ acknowledges the persistent agency of the state, in a varying but fundamentally legitimizing relationship to the scale of ‘the nation’” (x). Kathleen Newman relatedly remarks that “changes in film industries and in film style are now understood not merely to be a response to national conditions and pressures, but also to have, most always, multiple international determinants” (4). These comments provide an entrée into a particular analytical orientation – that of ‘transnational cinema’. But it is less common in film studies for scholars to note how the question of transnationalism relates to a debate in sociology about the shortcomings of what Ulrich Beck has called ‘methodological nationalism’. Beck describes this as “the claim that ‘modern society’ and ‘modern politics’ can only be organized in the form of national states. Society is equated with society organized in nationally and territorially delimited states” (24). Beck turns that critique into a theoretical position, decrying methodological nationalism because it “imposes a territorial understanding of society as based upon state-constructed and state-controlled borders”

(27), in which culture “is understood in terms of self-enclosed territorially demarcated units” (30).³

There are two separate, but linked, aspects of this critique. First, for the purposes of his polemic, Beck treats a society as though it were territorially bounded. In fact, policing the confines is conventionally an attribute of states considered as sovereign actors, rather than that of nations – which may, or may not, coincide with states. The successful hermetic sealing-off of cultural boundaries is not the global norm, although attempts are regularly made by various states, for instance, to control how globally connected communications play out within their territories: censoring and regulating the Internet is perhaps the prime contemporary instance of this stance. Second, Beck also presents cultures as self-enclosed. His picture does not reflect either the actual condition of most societies and culture or indeed, the practice of contemporary social science. Rather it encapsulates the belief-system of an outmoded nationalism – the object of his attack – and is a straw man.

Beck’s antidote to this *cordon sanitaire* conception – which encapsulates the worldview of those who lament *any* cross-

³ Actually, ‘methodological statism’ would be a better formulation, because Beck is really talking about sovereign states.

border movement of people, ideas, goods and services – is for us to embrace what he calls ‘methodological cosmopolitanism’. This is both an outlook and a research practice.⁴ Beck describes it as observing and investigating the “boundary-transcending and boundary-effacing multiperspectivism of social and political agents through very different »lenses•. A single phenomenon, transnationality, for example, can, perhaps even must be, analysed locally and nationally and transnationally and translocally and globally” (82).

In a cosmopolitan move that broadly fits in with Beck’s approach, Tim Bergfelder has also argued for taking the transnational dimension seriously, recognizing the limitations of thinking of European cinema as a simple aggregation of discrete national cinemas. Rather, he proposes, that “an alternative history of European cinema would [...] avoid narratives and discourses of containment, replacing these with critical travelogues, charting the fluidity of identities, and tracing the brief encounters

⁴ Beck has described the ‘cosmopolitan outlook’ as comprising a “Global sense, a sense of boundarylessness. An everyday historically alert, reflexive awareness of ambivalences in a milieu of blurring differentiations and cultural contradictions. It reveals [...] the possibility of shaping one’s life under conditions of cultural mixture” (3).

between films and shifting audience formations” (319). This implies that there are versions of ‘Europeanness’ that may challenge and overcome fixed conceptions of nationality. Of course, this move is subject to many contingencies so a historiography of cinema of this kind faces the challenge met by all historical revisions. For instance, the present economic and political crisis in the European Union, and more widely on the continent, has been striking for its anti-cosmopolitanism, where discourses of territorial containment, and challenges to the acceptance of multiform identities, have made a come-back.

In his cosmopolitan zeal, therefore, Beck is too ready to dismiss the continuing analytical relevance of researching national cultures and states. These still remain relatively constraining frameworks, because even if – quite rightly – we abandon the exclusive vocabulary of the national for analytical purposes, it remains the case that there is an international order based on the state system. Any would-be cosmopolitan outlook has to negotiate with this reality.

Moreover, it is crucially important to distinguish between nation and state, largely elided by Beck. The state is a political formation. Its stability and continuity cannot be

taken for granted always and everywhere. Indeed, what is in fact the inherently negotiated nature of the state also applies to the nation, whether in its formation or its continuing boundary-maintenance.

As it happens, one does not have to espouse methodological cosmopolitanism to recognize the shortcomings of methodological nationalism. There is no all-or-nothing choice to make. Consider, for instance, the difficulties faced by those who have pursued a unifying political communications process in a common European Union (EU) public sphere. When trying to think about a complex formation such as the EU it is necessary to conceptualize relations between the national and supranational levels of government and governance. It is all too clear that the supranational dimension does not abolish or transcend the national level but rather complexly interacts with it (cf. Fossum and Schlesinger). The argument applies equally to theories of national cinema, where – however much we might stress the transnational dimension of ‘global Hollywood’ (cf. Goldsmith, Ward and O’Regan) – we also need to recognize the continuing importance of state and nation, which are deeply imbricated in the “border-

circumventing flow resulting from the rapid transformation of electronic media and information and communication technologies” (Schlesinger, “Scope” 30).

Thinking outwards from the national

If we were to take Beck’s position, research into the formation of a national film agency would appear – at first blush – to be firmly locked into methodological nationalism. After all, the analysis of the UK Film Council concerns a state agency institutionally rooted in the British national container. But does this force us into conceptual closure? In fact, it does not. Instead, let us pose the question this way: how might we think *beyond* ‘the national’ *through* the national, *through* the prism of state film policy and its ideological legitimations? Specifically, how might film agencies such as the UKFC – expressly constituted as bastions of the national culture and economy, as state-created institutions in a world of states – relate to the international, the transnational and the global?

As a first response, let us contrast Beck’s vision of multiculturalism and border-transcendent social relations with the following, rather baldly instrumentalist statement

about 'Britain and the world' in *A Bigger Picture*, the official report that in 1998 recommended the creation of the UKFC:

[W]e need to create an environment that is attractive to foreign investors and supportive of British exporters, and to play a leading role in the commercial and creative development of the European film industry. (Film Policy Review Group)

The 'we' is the state ostensibly acting for the nation but in reality speaking both to, and for, dominant sectors of the film industry. As imagined in *A Bigger Picture*, Britain's place in the world is undoubtedly based in a conception of *global interconnectedness* but those links are presented as operating primarily through international trade. Strikingly, in light of today's mounting Euro-skepticism in the UK, the quote demonstrates a largely unqualified awareness of Britain's place in Europe that is now hard to find. The model of *economic* connectedness in this official report, while central to conceptions of globalization, certainly does

not equate to any definition of cosmopolitanism. Its internationalist *raison d'être* is that of building the national economy through state intervention and by encouraging the competitive behavior of enterprises and individuals.

From these observations, it is clear that both film agencies and film policy are extremely productive sites for understanding how national interests are pursued and how competitive economic advantage and cross-border cultural flows are officially conceived. However, while an agency may indeed be located in a specific territory, this does not entail a vision of a closed society or economy but instead entails a commitment to one that is necessarily open for the purpose of doing business.

In what follows, this essay will illustrate two aspects of the UKFC's transnational orientation. First, by focusing on some of its leading figures, we may see how Hollywood figured large both in public rhetoric and the value placed by government on their actual experience. Second, in a more minor key, we can also see how the UK's membership of the EU necessarily required that a European dimension to the Film Council's work be developed.

A neat history?

The creation and destruction of the Film Council were both political acts that took place within the *longue durée* of British film policy intervention. British governments have devised one or other form of state aid for film production since the 1920s. We can point to the existence of exhibition quotas back in 1927 – a defense against U.S. imports. The same defensive strategy led to the creation of the National Film Finance Corporation in 1949 to distribute loans for production, and a trade subsidy called the Eady Levy that was created in 1950, and later – shifting from voluntary to compulsory status – administered by the British Film Fund Agency, set up in 1957. A confusing variety of interventions followed from 1979 on, including the abolition and re-creation of support agencies (cf. Dickinson and Street; Dickinson and Harvey, “Film”; Hill). Despite party-political differences over the precise policies to be pursued by the state from time to time, viewed over the long term, these are much less significant than the repeated tendency to intervene. Subsidies, levies, quotas and tax breaks, in various combinations, have been the main economic

repertoire available in a longstanding, sporadically pursued, defensive strategy towards Hollywood.

In the UK, political and industry attitudes to the country's undoubted economic and cultural subordination to the U.S. film industry are inherently ambiguous. Depending on the specific interests involved, Hollywood may be embraced as *the* major source of business for production, exhibition and glory for British talent at the BAFTAs and Oscars, or instead be seen as a challenge to plural forms of indigenous production and distribution.

Suffice it to say that two interlocking assumptions have been in continually shifting inter-relation: first, an emphasis on safeguarding national identity through cultural expression; and second, a need to keep inventing new forms of economic intervention to address the U.S. challenge (cf. Magor and Schlesinger). These assumptions are repeatedly embodied in policy positions and institutional invention and reinvention. The *national* vantage point is – and always has been – deeply imbricated in readings of the *global* cinema marketplace and the soft power and influence afforded by cultural relations.

From 1995 onwards, shortly before the Film Council was set up, a major source of film finance came through the National Lottery. James Caterer has noted that “competition with Europe seemed to be a prime motivating factor [...]” (50) for the creation of this funding stream, illustrating that – unavoidably – the ‘national’ in film policy is routinely conceived *relationally*, even though Europe is, and has been, of secondary importance to the U.S.A. Caterer further observed that “building links with Europe or sustaining an infrastructure to sustain Hollywood blockbusters were only partial solutions to the industry’s difficulties, with the big question remaining: what measures could be taken to stimulate home-grown film production?” (63).

Following film producers’ lobbying, in 1997 the Lottery allocated significant funding to support the work of three ‘film franchises’ – Pathé Pictures, the Film Consortium, and DNA Films which constituted an attempt to create mini-studios (cf. Magor and Schlesinger 303-305). The idea was to establish stable frameworks for the production, distribution and exhibition of slates of films. Vainly as it turned out, hopes were invested in the successful vertical reintegration of Pathé Pictures, the largest of the franchises,

as a counterweight to the U.S. majors (cf. Caterer 64-68). If the would-be British studio model was highly under-capitalized, nevertheless it paid homage to the USA (and the EU).

Creating the Film Council

Rather than pursue a detailed account of how the new national agency was created, let us consider the *agency* of some key individuals in the development of the UKFC. Building on earlier research into the role of networks of expertise, the argument is that a ‘policy generation’, small in numbers, with preferred suppliers of ideas, dominated the Labour government’s creative economy policy, which underpinned developments in film policy (cf. Schlesinger, “Creativity”).

The pursuit of *national* interests through the mobilization of expertise in the policy field may often involve drawing on actors whose knowledge and reputation is deeply formed by their *transnational* experience. Because film production is so greatly shaped by international business relations, this has affected how the UK government has valued certain

kinds of knowledge and that in turn proved significant for how the new agency was formed.

Moving back to the specifics of the case, in 1997 the Labour government's Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, mobilized expertise by setting up the Film Policy Review Group (FPRG). This task force produced *A Bigger Picture*, the report already mentioned, whose key recommendation was to set up a new national film agency. The FPRG's co-chairman was Stewart Till, President of International, PolyGram Filmed Entertainment (then part of Philips, the Dutch multi-national corporation). Till personally embodied a rather short-lived European attempt to set up a studio on the Hollywood model.

He had emerged as a key industry player in the policy field earlier in the 1990s, alongside former Columbia Pictures CEO, David Puttnam, producer, inter alia, of *Chariots of Fire* (1981) and *The Killing Fields* (1984). Puttnam was actively involved both in background discussion of policy matters and in giving advice on the allocation of Arts Council film funding in the 1990s. Indeed Puttnam's policy influence under New Labour extended across several fields.

In 1997, Puttnam, in terms redolent of successive post-war French governments, as well as the leadership of the EU at that time, sounded the alarm-bell of cultural and industrial war with the USA, arguing that it is “frankly dangerous to allow Hollywood’s extraordinary dominance in the field of filmed entertainment” (349). Noting the interconnections between Hollywood and Washington and how this sold both values and goods, he advocated a similar posture for the UK and the European Union. His intervention was completely aligned with Labour’s thinking on the creative industries: “the distinguishing characteristics of any nation or community today lie in the quality of its intellectual property” (353)⁵ It was time, he maintained, to exploit Europe’s cultural assets as part of a global economic struggle.

As his position chimed with Chris Smith’s views, Puttnam’s views carried considerable weight in his background discussions with the Culture Secretary. According to informed sources interviewed for this project, Puttnam influenced the appointment of key players to the new Film Council’s board of directors. Moreover, two of David

⁵ The foundational document, published in 1998, is that of the Creative Industries Task Force.

Puttnam's close advisers supported work for the FPRG, and later continued to exercise major influence in policy-making circles.⁶ We were reliably informed that it was Puttnam who recommended Stewart Till as co-chair of the film policy review to Chris Smith, who described his choice – and how these things are done – as follows: “I hosted a reception for the British film industry and I met with a lot of the key players at that time. I decided to establish the Film Policy Review Group and to ask Stewart Till to chair it, and I announced that at the [Cannes] Film Festival [1997]” (UKFC Project Research Team, “Chris Smith”).

When the new body was launched in May 2000, it was intended to draw together all major public funding for film and also to operate at the heart of film strategy. The 1998 Film Policy Review recommended the “[r]ationalisation of Government machinery in the longer term”, the principal aim being to “provide strategic leadership for the film industry and a clearer focus on its development” (Film Policy Review Group 50).

The underlying *logic of rationalization* involved coupling a critique of the existing agency landscape with reforms that

⁶ These were John Newbiggin, then a key policy adviser at the DCMS, and Neil Watson, who became main strategy adviser at the UKFC.

sought to simplify its workings. The pursuit of ‘coherence’, of one national roof, meant that the previous patchwork funding arrangement was necessarily found wanting. The creation of the Film Council – while sweeping up smaller bodies⁷ – had left the BFI largely untouched, and the cultural and educational remits were sub-contracted to the older body. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith has argued – plausibly – that new Labour strategy “really was about the creative industries [...] Given that focus, it was never likely that that the BFI, whose interests were, in the eyes of the modernisers, positively antiquarian, could be put at the centre of a strategy whose main aim was the development of a sustainable domestic film industry with that of film culture firmly in second place” (300).

As it transpired, the BFI’s continued existence proved to be significant for how the Film Council operated during its lifespan and also for film policy, after its demise. The formation of the Film Council was not without critics. For instance, Margaret Dickinson and Sylvia Harvey criticized

⁷ Aside from funding the BFI and in practice controlling its board-level appointments, the new Film Council incorporated the British Film Commission, the BFI Production Department, British Screen Finance and the Arts Council of England’s Lottery Film Department.

the closed process by which it was established and, pertinently for the present analysis, also noted the “relatively limited range of interests represented on its governing body” (“Film Policy” 425) as well as the Film Council’s non-statutory status (cf. Dickinson and Harvey “Public Policy”). From a sociological point of view, the matter is not just about which interests were represented but also *how* those interests were legitimized by government to serve its purposes by officially recognizing one particular form of expertise to the relative exclusion of others.

Operating alongside the logic of rationalization, therefore, was *the logic of expertise*. Expertise – in practice – was identified as residing with those who agreed with the new project, rather than drawing on the gamut of possible expert opinion. Needless to say, whether the right kinds of experts were chosen became one of the continuing critical lines of debate about the Film Council. But that is less interesting for present purposes than how some key figures were seen by the Labour government to straddle the national and the global and therefore fit in with the FPRG’s objectives.

The role of key players such as David Puttnam and Stewart Till may be productively analyzed by using Pierre

Bourdieu's conception of how a habitus shapes its inhabitants. As Bourdieu put it, this leads us to "insist on the *generative capacities* of dispositions, it being understood that these are acquired, socially constituted dispositions" whose •»creative•, active, inventive capacity [...] that of an acting agent" (13).

The mobilization of pertinent expertise occurs in the following way. Given individuals' immersion in the business of making films comes to be valued by policy makers by virtue of their prominence and also their connections with those in power and their advisers. They are then selected as key actors to implement policy, and asked to apply their learned practices and modes of thought to the operations of an agency such as the UKFC, itself an officially created collective agent with an expert national mission.

Once the idea of the UKFC had been endorsed by an official report evidently set up precisely to being about that outcome, the Culture Secretary, Chris Smith, had to decide who would run it (cf. Schlesinger "Creation"). We were reliably told that he had privately identified the outstandingly successful British film director, Alan Parker,

as the man for the job. Parker had two Best Director nominations, for *Midnight Express* (1978) and *Mississippi Burning* (1988), as well as being noted for directing *Bugsy Malone* (1976) and *Fame* (1980) and much else besides. He was a highly credible figure in Hollywood.

At the time that the Film Council was being launched, Parker was Chairman of the BFI. Smith and Parker had also identified the BFI's then Director, John Woodward, as the person to be the Film Council's new CEO. Previously, Woodward had been Director of the Producers Association for Cinema and Television (PACT). Thus, in an unusual act of decapitation, the BFI lost its two leading lights to the new organization, to which it became subordinate.

Woodward's own credibility and expertise were different from Parker's. At Smith's request, PACT had commissioned a consultancy report, submitted in September 1997 (cf. Hydra Associates). This reviewed "potential structures of government support" for the UK film industry. A producer-focused inquiry, it found considerable doubts among producers about the possibility of a single or dominant funding agency for film, although this was still one of the options mooted.

Hollywood to the fore

In 2002, two years into his chairmanship – and by now endowed with the knightly title, Sir Alan – Parker gave a crucial, and controversial, chairman’s speech in which he set out his views on the future of the UK film industry. As an exemplary credo of one schooled in a Hollywood entertainment habitus, through whose eyes the limitations of British national cinema are seen, it could hardly be bettered:

The basic truth of the film industry is that it is a *distribution-led* business [...]. The formula used now by Hollywood is exactly the same as it has been for 80 years. [...] Make no mistake, international distribution is where the real money is made in the film industry. [...] We need to abandon forever the “Little England” vision of a UK industry comprised of small British film companies delivering parochial British films. [...] We need to stimulate the growth of an industry that embraces the international market. [...] This means

reinventing the UK as a “film hub” – a creative core. A film hub which is a natural destination for international investment. (Parker 6-9, emphasis in original)

This line was just a further elaboration of the UKFC’s established strategy of trying to change producers’ expectations about the purposes of film funding. Just a few months after the Film Council’s launch, in response to a journalist’s question as to why ‘mainly big budget films’ were now central to film finance, the CEO, John Woodward, had replied:

Because it’s pointless to go on handing out thousands of small amounts of money to small films that will struggle to find a distributor and be seen in cinemas. Because there is always a bigger chance of getting a return on an investment in a higher-budget film. Big films are more likely to go wide and repay the money put into them, it’s as simple as that. (Poirier 1)

In 2004, Till succeeded Parker as chairman for five years. After concluding the FPRG's work, he had been appointed deputy chairman of the Film Council, along with Alan Parker. In the course of giving evidence to a parliamentary committee, he described how his PolyGram experience had affected his outlook on the lack of companies of scale in the British film industry:

We had a company called PolyGram. I was the Head of International at that company. We were set up in 1992. Up to the year 2000, we made films like *Four Weddings and a Funeral* and *Notting Hill*, and set up distribution in 13 different countries including North America. We were unfortunate. We were bought by Seagram, who wanted to merge PolyGram Records and MCA Records, and were a casualty of that takeover. *Speaking personally, if there is one thing that the British film industry could benefit from, I would argue that it is a British-based mini Hollywood studio that had a worldwide distribution capability.* However, that is not

within the remit of the Film Council. (Till 23,
emphasis added)

In 2009, Till was succeeded by Tim Bevan, of Working Title Films – a one-time subsidiary of PolyGram Filmed Entertainment that was then taken over by Universal Studios. In Michael Wayne’s phrase, with this third key chairmanship, the ‘Atlanticist paradigm’ regarding British film policy remained in play (cf. Wayne). Bevan’s track record had already been extraordinary, including such high-grossing films such as *Four Weddings and Funeral* (1994) and *Notting Hill* (1999). He had sat on the Film Council’s inaugural board, but had only a short period to make his mark as chairman before the Film Council was axed in 2010. Imbued with a strong sense of Hollywood’s financial and structural advantages relative to the UK film industry, he noted pertinently that “It’s important to have public money going into films, because otherwise you don’t have a film industry, basically” (UKFC Research Project Team “Tim Bevan”).

Europe, in a minor key

Although the Hollywood entertainment habitus was dominant among the Film Council's originators and leading figures, the agency was also inescapably embedded in relations with Europe – and from early on.

Because the UK is a member state of the European Union, the Film Council could hardly be indifferent to this political positioning. In May 2002, the CEO, John Woodward, initiated the setting up of a network of European Film Agency Directors (EFAD), together with his French counterpart, David Kessler, then Director-General of the Centre national de la cinématographie (CNC). This grouping became a durable lobby, embracing all the EU's member states, whose key objective was to become an interlocutor of the European Commission and the European Parliament. Thus, for instance, in a 'common declaration' EFAD reaffirmed "the necessity for greater clarity, coherence and certainty in the rules drawn up by the European Commission that govern public funding" (1). A particular concern was the role of state aid in sustaining feature film markets in Europe as well as maintaining diversity of expression. The UKFC was keen to ensure that

the UK became the European center for global film activity (cf. UK Film Council, *European Strategy*).

The UKFC also established a MEDIA Programme desk, in order to benefit from the support for distributing co-productions that this EU funding source provided. MEDIA's main objectives were to circulate diverse European works in the EU and to reinforce the competitiveness of the EU's audiovisual sector. In fact, EU audiovisual policy developments were routinely on the Film Council's agenda through the work of its European Strategy Group, although some close to the action thought it remained a low priority (UKFC Project Research Team, "Jonathan Davis").⁸

Throughout its life, the UKFC was involved in making submissions either solely or with other agencies to the European Commission, notably in relation to state aid for the film sector. But it also lobbied across the whole range of the EU's policy initiatives such as the MEDIA programme's budget, digitization of cinemas, the agenda for culture in a globalizing world, creative content online, copyright and internet safety. While these concerns were not at the heart of the UKFC's strategy, once again it is clear that alongside the

⁸ In 2009, the UKFC spent three and a half times more on its L.A. Desk than its MEDIA Desk. See UK Film Council, *Scenario Planning*.

route to Los Angeles there was also another road that led directly to the heartlands of European policy-making in Brussels.

Conclusion

It has been argued that a national film agency can be an excellent vantage point for thinking about cinema in a transnational context. The idea that the national space is a self-contained enclosure and that its study is limited by ‘methodological nationalism’ is confuted by this analysis. From the very start, the UK’s national film policy has been deeply affected by its location in the international marketplace for film, being shaped by attempted, and repeatedly failed, competition with Hollywood before coming to rest in a subordinate role in the “new international cultural division of labor” (Miller). Being a member state of the European Union also defined positions taken and strategies pursued. It was unavoidably the case that the new national body’s institutional form and rationale would be shaped by trans-border relations. And, as there is no more telling way of trying to steer an agency than through the actions and beliefs of key individuals, the

UKFC leadership's immersion in the Hollywood entertainment habitus was a key consideration for a government intent on capturing the magical know-how needed to secure global success. Whether it can be deemed to have succeeded is quite another story.

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